

Jan. 21 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

This protocol is an important advance for human rights. At the same time, it fully protects the military recruitment and readiness requirements of the United States. I am committed to a speedy process of review and signature and to working with the Senate on this historic achievement to protect the world's children.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, adopted on January 21 by a working group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Statement on Indications of a Third Consecutive Budget Surplus *January 21, 2000*

Today we received further evidence that our economic strategy of fiscal discipline is working. The tough choices we made on deficit reduction have turned a deficit of \$290 billion in 1992 into a surplus of \$124 billion in 1999—the largest surplus in history and the second consecutive surplus in more than 40 years. The latest financial numbers from the Department of the Treasury indicate that we are on track this year to

reach a third consecutive annual budget surplus. In the last 2 years we have paid down more than \$140 billion in debt, and these numbers confirm that we are continuing to pay down even more debt. I remain committed to maintaining our strategy of fiscal discipline to keep our economy strong and pay down the debt by 2015 for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa *January 21, 2000*

Dear _____:

I am pleased to submit the fifth annual report on the Administration's Comprehensive Trade and Development Policy for Africa, as required by section 134 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act. The past year has seen the broadening and deepening of our economic relations with Sub-Saharan Africa as we pursue common objectives under the Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa and set a course for the 21st century.

For the first time in history, a U.S.-Africa Ministerial meeting was held in Washington in March 1999. The event was attended by 83 ministers from 46 Sub-Saharan countries, as well as representatives from 4 north African nations, the heads of 8 African regional organizations, and 8 members of my Cabinet and 4 agency heads. The Ministerial resulted in the *Blueprint for a U.S.-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century*, a document setting forth common perspectives and plans for U.S.-Africa cooperation on

a series of important issues, including the integration of African states into the global economy, regional integration, development assistance, sector issues including investment, debt, and agriculture, and the broader issues of human resource development, HIV/AIDS, transnational threats, and conflict resolution. We will continue to build on this blueprint in the coming year.

The legislative cornerstone of our Africa trade policy is the African Growth and Opportunity Act. I am pleased that this legislation has been approved by both chambers of Congress, and I look forward to final approval by the Congress of this historic legislation early this year.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act will add further impetus to our Nation's bipartisan efforts to enhance economic growth and strengthen U.S. trade with and investment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

My Administration continues to be guided by the conviction that economic development in

Sub-Saharan Africa will benefit both Africans and Americans. As highlighted in the attached report, the United States has made significant progress in supporting sustainable growth and expanded trade in Africa through a series of successful initiatives, focused on increased economic engagement, enhanced market access, technical assistance in implementing economic reforms, trade missions, development assistance, debt relief, and support for the region's integration into the multilateral trading system.

My Administration will continue working with the Congress, the private sector, the countries of Africa, and our other trading partners to implement the policies and programs contained in this report. We have charted the course and

look forward to an even stronger, mutually beneficial U.S. partnership with the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, and Sam Gejdenson, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; William V. Roth, Jr., chairman, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, ranking member, Senate Committee on Finance; and Bill Archer, chairman, and Charles B. Rangel, ranking member, House Committee on Ways and Means.

The President's Radio Address

January 22, 2000

Good morning. In just a few days, I will report to the American people and the Congress on the State of the Union, and I'll propose new ways to meet the many challenges of this exciting new century. One of the most important challenges we have is strengthening and modernizing Medicare. Today I want to give you a progress report on our efforts to do just that, through our ongoing fight against fraud, waste, and abuse in the Medicare system.

For more than 30 years now, Medicare has helped us fulfill one of our most fundamental obligations, to protect the health of older Americans. But when I became President, Medicare was projected to go bankrupt by 1999. Since I took office, we have made tough choices to strengthen Medicare. We've extended the life of the Trust Fund until at least 2015, with better management not only of Medicare but of the economy and by waging a sustained campaign against Medicare fraud.

Medicare fraud and waste are more than an abuse of the system; they're an abuse of the taxpayer. By overbilling, charging for phony procedures, and selling substandard supplies, Medicare cheats cost taxpayers hundreds of millions a year. That's why we've assigned more Federal prosecutors and FBI agents than ever to fight this kind of fraud, and why we've invested in new tools to investigate and prosecute these

crimes. All told, our efforts have prevented the wasteful spending of an estimated \$50 billion, and aggressive enforcement has recovered nearly \$1.6 billion for the Medicare Trust Fund.

Today I'm releasing two reports that show just how effective this fight against fraud has been. Americans can be proud. The first report shows that in 1999 we recovered nearly half a billion dollars in fines and settlements and returned three-quarters of that to the Medicare Trust Fund. The second report, on Medicare integrity, shows our success in catching fraudulent claims and preventing \$5.3 billion worth of inappropriate payments in the last year alone. So when it comes to prosecuting fraud and abuse, we're doing more than filing cases; we're also winning convictions. In the last year, convictions in health care fraud cases shot up by a fifth, for an increase of more than 410 percent since I became President.

Just this week the Department of Justice won another important victory for Medicare beneficiaries. A health care company had been bilking Medicare by sending patients for needless tests and procedures. The more tests providers ordered, the more kickbacks they got in return—lavish dinners, yacht trips. Federal prosecutors took the company to court and won the largest such settlement in history, recovering nearly half a billion dollars.